

The Next Step

Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Salina, Kansas
July 23, 2018





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Introduction

To the Citizens of Salina

The Park and Recreation Department takes great pride in serving the citizens of Salina! To provide the community with a more positive park and recreation experience, the City Commission graciously committed to working with renowned Park and Recreation Consultant, Richard Horton, to develop the 2018 City of Salina Park and Recreation Master Plan which is being called THE NEXT STEP.

The NEXT STEP Master Plan will serve three purposes as a minimum. First, it is an accumulation of information gathered from the community that will build upon the expressed interests and desires of citizens for the quality of life that is important to them. Second, it will function as a guide for the future development of our incredible park and recreation system; and third, it will be used to make sure that tax dollars are spent wisely.

In anticipation of the completion of the NEXT STEP Master Plan early in 2018, the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and park and recreation staff will continue their dedication to serving the community and working hard to improve its park system. We plan to build upon recent improvements that you may have noticed. For example:

- new playgrounds in several parks such as Thomas, Pacific, Woodland, Sunset and Phillips
- the addition of lights to the Magnolia Soccer Complex will ensure that the soccer complex can flourish as softball does at Bill Burke and baseball does at the East Crawford Recreation area

We are proud of these recent upgrades but realize that our challenge moving forward is significant. As pointed out in the NEXT STEP Master Plan, resources are limited while needs are great. The entire park system needs upgrades, new facilities are needed such as tennis courts and athletic fields, trails and connectivity opportunities should be continued, natural resource areas at Lakewood and Indian Rock Parks need to be protected and enhanced, just to name a few.

Notwithstanding the issues that face the park system, citizens can be assured that the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and staff will continue to work diligently and wisely allocate tax dollars to implement the NEXT STEP Master Plan. We realize that tax dollars alone will not address all the wants and needs identified in the Plan; however, it will give credibility to the development of more public/private partnerships to leverage city resources that will help build the park system into one comparable to any in the State of Kansas. We know this will take time to get this done but everyone is up to the challenge.

As the NEXT STEP Master Plan moves forward into the implementation phase, citizens can be assured that their preferences have been strongly considered as recommended improvements have been specified. Through the citizen survey results, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings, the Plan has been citizen-driven.

In closing, the Park and Recreation Department is aware of its role in the community. It is humbled by its responsibility of facilitating family gatherings, swim lessons for your children and the economic development impact that results from large sports events while also protecting the environment and providing access to nature within the city limits at Indian Rock and Lakewood Parks.

With your continued support, the Salina Park System and Recreation Program will be on the list of communities about which it is said that “All great cities have a great park system”!

Sincerely,



Chris Cotten, Director
Salina Park and Recreation Department



CREDITS

Credit is given to city commissioners, the city manager and deputy city manager, the community engagement coordinator, park and recreation advisory board members and park and recreation staff for their leadership that led to the development of this 2018 Next Step Park and Recreation Master Plan. The consultant learned from, and found ways to incorporate into the Plan, the city commission's stated goals, the city manager's vision that the City of Salina will become known as the best city in the State of Kansas and in-depth details about community needs/preferences from the park and recreation advisory board and the park and recreation staff.

**City Commission**

Kaye Crawford – Mayor

Karl Ryan – Vice-Mayor

Jon Blanchard, Commissioner

Trent Davis, Commissioner

Melissa Rose Hodges, Commissioner

City Manager

Jason Gage

Deputy City Manager

Mike Schrage

Community Engagement Coordinator

Rachel Hinde

Park and Recreation Advisory Board

Gavin Aills

Fred Aubuchon

Doug Rudick

Melanie Hedgespeth

Dr. Mark Bandre

Mary Bender

Ramona Newsom

Johnna Vosseller

Melissa Hodges

Park and Recreation Administration

Chris Cotten, Director

Scott Garrie, Deputy Director

Rick Martin, Park Superintendent

Travis Scheele, Recreation Superintendent

Cindy Lamer, Business Manager

Jeff Hammond, Kenwood Cove Manager

Brian Underwood, Lakewood Discovery Center Manager

Linnette Burger, Therapeutic Recreation Program Manager

Tim Kerbs, Recreation Program Manager



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The City of Salina is on course to implementing a vision that will provide citizens and visitors with experiences that will change the future of the community in a positive way for decades to come. The benefits that will flow from the Smoky Hill River Corridor Project and the 2018 Park and Recreation Plan are exactly the opportunities that citizens-at-large, businesses and corporations are seeking as they determine where they will live, work and play.

Current Community Challenges

The preferred outcome from the Park and Recreation Master Plan in Salina, just like many communities, is challenged by the shortfall between dreams for the future and the ability to fund those dreams. Specifically, for Salina:

- The City's current financial condition limits the dollars available for the funding of operating budgets, capital projects and catching up with deferred maintenance, all of which are costly.
- The demand for park system upgrades and new projects is highly competitive as staff, citizens-at-large and special interest groups seek to have their preference rated as the highest priority
- National trends are affecting the preferences and expectations that citizens have of their Park and Recreation Department. There is movement toward self-improvement and self-directed activities that affect the type of facilities that are offered that is challenging traditional preferences such as sports

Master Planning Strategies

Three primary strategies have been used to develop this master plan. Each has been selected as it provides a logic that assists the community and its leaders to make informed decisions. Each of the three strategies is described below.

Financial Investment Strategy

Relevant to the close-to-home experiences provided by other communities in the Salina region, a key concept used to develop this Park and Recreation Master Plan is called the Red Ocean/Blue Ocean Strategy. In short, the Red Ocean piece of the strategy generally recognizes that Salina cannot and should not invest in expensive facilities that are provided by others when they are a reasonable commute for citizens of Salina. On the other hand, the Blue Ocean piece of the strategy recognizes that there are generally some investments the City should make when dollars become available. These investments fit into two categories: a) projects that are in high demand by citizens because they add so greatly to their vision of a quality of life that they are willing to support with their tax dollars; and b) in the blue ocean, there are projects that the City can consider that are not competing with destination facilities located in the Red Ocean that are provided by others in the region.

Experience Planning

Not to be overlooked as the Park and Recreation Master Plan is developed is the concept of Experience Planning. In short, experience planning is understanding the value that the experience holds for the individual that determines its worth. Selected experiences that are valued by the citizens of Salina and provided by the Park and Recreation Department are listed below. The challenge for the City is to identify a funding source that can be applied to these experiences in a manner that elevates and sustains them at a high level.

Selected Experiences valued by citizens of Salina

- Trails
- Natural resource opportunities such as Lakewood and Indian Rock Parks
- Sports Fields
- Kenwood Aquatic Park

Level of Service Planning (LOS)

The level of service provided by the city to its citizens for its park and recreation services has been quantified. We learned from the statistically valid citizen survey that the quality of parks is 11% below national benchmarks and that maintenance is 4% below national benchmarks.

Citizen Preferences

The public engagement piece of the master planning process included key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, public meetings and a statistically valid citizen survey. The outcome from this process was captured in the results of the statistically valid citizen survey with emphasis on a priority investment rating (PIR) as calculated by the ETC Market Research Institute.

The survey's results for the highest rated recreation programs in priority order of their PIR rating was:

- special events
- adult fitness and wellness programs
- nature programs and environmental education
- outdoor adventure programs
- water fitness programs (another provider in town prefers the city not be involved with this program)

The survey's results for the highest rated recreation facilities in priority order of their PIR rating was:

- walking and biking trails
- indoor running and walking track
- park shelters and picnic areas
- passive natural areas
- indoor aquatics facility
- nature center
- indoor fitness
- special events
- adult fitness and wellness programs
- nature programs/environmental education
- outdoor adventure programs

Master Plan Project Prioritization Logic

To determine priorities for future funding, there are several approaches that should be considered; namely, the following:

- recognition of the budget challenges the community faces
- understanding the experiences (experience planning) that citizens are willing to support with their time and dollars
- analysis of the facilities that fit in the Red Ocean/Blue Ocean Strategy spending categories
- consensus by leadership of how the community should spend its dollars in three suggested categories:
 - Category 1 - Funding to maintain and improve what we have such as general park upgrades
 - Category 2 - Funding to expand what we have for those projects that are not declining in participation such as trails
 - Category 3 – Funding for a new trend or vision such as the Smoky Hill River Project
- There are several EVALUATION FILTERS that can be used in stakeholder conversations as final decisions for resource allocation are made. The filters are listed below:
 - Citizen preferences - As expressed and supported in the statistically valid survey (PIR rating), focus groups, public meetings, steering committee meetings,

- Park and Recreation Advisory Board, and the political process
- Geographic considerations – Relationship between the project and the location where most users live
- Life cycle of the program – Evaluation of the popularity of the program to determine if it is growing, stable/mature, or declining
- Demographics – Assessment of demographic characteristics that will affect the success of the project, including age, household income, ethnicity, education, and gender
- Facilities provided by the city and others – Availability of facilities provided by the city and others such as the private sector, churches, schools, and not-for-profits (YMCA).
- Best practices in the park and recreation profession – Consideration of the successes of other highly recognized agencies throughout the United States
- Quality of life – Understanding of how the project adds quality to life in the community. Consideration for equitable citizen access to quality parks and facilities.
- Revenue-producing – Is the project capable of producing revenue from citizens and visitors? If so, what percentage (25%, 50%, 75% or 100%)?
- Safety and Security – Will the project reduce issues related to safety and security?

Master Plan Project priorities

Project priorities have been developed by using the Scenario Planning Approach. Understanding that the cost of all projects ranges in the millions of dollars, decision-makers will need to facilitate community conversations in a manner that utilizes the scenario planning tool to help frame the discussion in a way that the community can relate to as most households need to prioritize how best to spend their limited resources. The three categories of the Salina Scenario Planning Approach are as follows: HIGHLY RATED PROJECTS BY THE STATISTICALLY VALID CITIZEN SURVEY HAVE BEEN SHADED IN GRAY.

Scenario #1 – To take care of what we have

- \$5.6 Million of deferred maintenance
- Upgrades to all parks for items not included in the active and deferred maintenance list and identified in the park assessment chapter in this report
- Upgrades to Bill Burke and ECRA athletic fields
- Upgrades to Oakdale Tennis Courts provided a new tennis center is not funded

Scenario #2 – To expand what we have

- Expand the trail system
- Expand aquatic opportunities at the Kenwood Aquatic Park by adding a new destination attraction feature
- Expand the park system to acquire land adjacent to/near The Fieldhouse and south of town on the Ohio Street Corridor and at Kennedy Park if a larger parcel can be identified
- Expand three (3) existing spraygrounds to destination spraygrounds
- Expand four existing playgrounds to destination playgrounds
- Expand Thomas, Indian Rock, Centennial and Bill Burke Parks per the design concepts developed by the consultant
- Expand indoor meeting space opportunities by funding a new, and/or, renovated building at Indian Rock Park
- Expand the number of soccer fields at the Magnolia Soccer Complex by developing an additional eight (8) acres at that park
- Expand opportunities at Centennial Park by adding pickleball courts to re-purpose the skatepark area
- Expand opportunities at Kenwood Park, in an area south of the river where a playground will be removed, by adding a skatepark that is moved from Centennial Park to allow for pickleball courts
- Expand opportunities at Sunset Park by adding a new option such as futsal soccer, pickle ball, or a horseshoe pit
- Expand the ECRA athletic field complex by adding a new stadium and two new championship fields provided private partnership funding is secured
- Expand the Memorial lighting at Sunset Park to a commercial/destination level

Scenario #3 – To fund a new vision or trend

- Turf all athletic infields
- Add a destination water feature at Oakdale Park
- Develop a Tennis Center at Kenwood Park
- Construct the new Lakewood Park design concept as part of the Smoky Hill River Project

Project Costs

The consultant has developed an opinion of probable costs for four community parks and for which design concepts were developed, for general park upgrades to all parks, deferred maintenance throughout the entire system and new private/public projects for which the private sector is organizing. The price tag for everything on the list is in the millions of dollars and included in the Appendix of this master plan.

